Docket No.: 42339-199895

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A system comprising:

    an operating system adapted to operate on a processor;

    a memory device having a protected area, wherein said protected area is not directly accessible to said operating system;

    firmware coupled to said memory device;

    a virtual machine manager installed in said firmware operative to provide said operating system access to said protected area independently of any hardware controller of said memory device~~controller~~.

2. (Original) The system of claim 1, further comprising a plurality of protected areas on said memory device.

3. (Original) The system of claim 1, wherein said memory device comprises a hard disk.

4. (Original) The system of claim 2, wherein said system functions as a redundant array of independent disks (RAID).

5. (Original) The system of claim 1, further comprising a known working configuration stored in said protected area, wherein said known working configuration comprises critical file-system structures.

6. (Original) The system of claim 1, wherein said firmware provides operating system-specific file-system support.

7. (Original) The system of claim 1, further comprising extensibility modules stored in said protected area for pre-boot support.

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8. (Original) The system of claim 1, wherein said firmware provides operating system-independent file-system support.

9. (Currently amended) A method comprising:

     (a) protecting an area on a memory device;

     (b) providing a virtual machine manager (VMM) in firmware coupled to said memory device; and

     (c) providing access to said protected area through said VMM independently of any hardware controller of said memory device-controller.

10. (Original) The method of claim 9, wherein (c) further comprises:

     proxying an access request for said protected area with said VMM; and

     executing said access request to said protected area with said VMM.

11. (Original) The method of claim 9, wherein (a) further comprises protecting a plurality of areas on said memory device.

12. (Original) The method of claim 11, further comprising

     (d) using said plurality of protected areas as a redundant array of independent disks (RAID).

13. (Original) The method of claim 12, wherein (c) further comprises:

     translating a logical block address (LBA) request for said RAID to said plurality of protected areas; and

     executing said LBA request.

14. (Original) The method of claim 9, further comprising:

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(d) storing a known working configuration in said protected area, wherein said known working configuration comprises critical file-system structures; and

(e) using said known working configuration when a computer adapted to execute said method is unable to boot properly.

15. (Original) The method of claim 9, further comprising:

(d) providing operating system-specific file-system support with said firmware.

16. (Original) The method of claim 9, further comprising:

(d) storing extensibility modules in said protected area for pre-boot support.

17. (Original) The method of claim 9, further comprising:

(d) providing operating system-independent file-system support with said firmware. ·

18. (Currently amended) A machine-accessible medium containing code that, when executed by a computing platform, causes the computing platform to perform a method comprising:

(a) protecting an area on a memory device;

(b) using a virtual machine manager (VMM) coupled to said memory device; and

(c) providing access to said protected area through said VMM independently of any hardware controller of said memory device ~~controller~~.

19. (Original) The machine-accessible medium of claim 18, wherein (c) further comprises:

proxying an access request for said protected area with said VMM; and

executing said access request to said protected area with said VMM.

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20. (Original) The machine-accessible medium of claim 18, wherein (a) further comprises reserving a plurality of areas on said memory device.

21. (Original) The machine-accessible medium of claim 20, further containing code that, when executed by a computing platform, causes said method to further comprise:

(d) using said plurality of protected areas as a redundant array of independent disks (RAID).

22. (Original) The machine-accessible medium of claim 21, wherein (c) further comprises:

translating a logical block address (LBA) request for said RAID to said protected areas; and

executing said LBA request.

23. (Original) The machine-accessible medium of claim 18, further containing code that, when executed by a computing platform, causes said method to further comprise:

(d) storing a known working configuration in said protected area, wherein said known working configuration comprises critical file-system structures; and
(e) using said known working configuration when the computing platform is unable to boot properly.

24. (Original) The machine-accessible medium of claim 18, further containing code that, when executed by a computing platform, causes said method to further comprise:

(d) providing operating system-specific file-system support with said firmware.

25. (Original) The machine-accessible medium of claim 18, further containing code that, when executed by a computing platform, causes said method to further comprise:

(d) storing extensibility modules in said protected area for pre-boot support.

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26. (Original) The machine-accessible medium of claim 18, further containing code that, when executed by a computing platform, causes said method to further comprise:

      (d) providing operating system-independent file-system support with said firmware.